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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by American Psychological Association, Brothers of Charity, Congregations of St. Joseph, Elizabeth Seton Federation, International Association of Charities, International Federation on Ageing, International Presentation Association of Sisters of the Presentation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 2006.

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Statement

1. We, the above mentioned members of the NGO community, believe that it is imperative that agricultural employment should be given special emphasis in the Commission's theme of "Promotion of Full Employment and Decent Work for All" especially in countries where HIV/AIDS is rampant.

2. In concert with the African Member States, we recognize that some of the highest rates of HIV infections are found in the states of sub-Saharan Africa and we also recognize that despite all actions taken by African Member States and other stakeholders, the number of people living with HIV infection on the continent increased from 24.9 million in 2003 to 26.5 million in three years; and that this is compounded by the burden of TB, malaria and other infectious diseases;

3. We are also aware also that AIDS has disproportionately infected and affected women in sub-Saharan Africa, who in many developing countries comprise the majority of participants in agriculture, as well as in community organizations and care activities for the sick, and the majority of people infected with HIV/AIDS:[1] 59 per cent of HIV-positive adults in sub-Saharan Africa are women;

4. And we are aware that stigma and discrimination negates the human rights of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and still constitute a major barrier to an effective response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

5. In the light of this situation we believe that promoting agriculture as one form of decent work is essential to prevent the increased breakdown of society and increased malnutrition among those who live in areas afflicted by the pandemic. We believe this emphasis is necessary for two main reasons:

- Agriculture must be sustained to allow for sufficient quality food resources available at affordable prices in countries where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is currently concentrated.

6. We note particularly that:

a. Because HIV/AIDS has caused the death of many farmers, the promotion of work in agriculture must take into consideration that other resources may be needed to offset the reduction in human resources for farming.

b. Child labor increases with the demise of working age adults and when this occurs children tend to drop out of school.

7. The majority of farmers in African countries are women. Hence, care must be taken to ensure that the agricultural sector provides a form of decent employment for those women who will be impacted more than men in agriculture due to deaths from HIV/AIDS.

8. Research in Kenya indicated different outcomes if the farmer who died from AIDS was female rather than male:

- If a female head of household died (most from HIV/AIDS), it was more likely that the production of food crops like grain would be adversely affected while, if a male head of household died, it was likely that "cash crops" (coffee, tea and sugar) would be most affected.[2]

- If a male head of household died then farm equipment was sold off while, when a female head of household died, it was small animals that were sold when females died. So when men died it was less sustainable for women to continue to be farmers.

[1] May 2006, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*.
[2] Yamano, T. and Jayne, T.S. (2002): Measuring the Impacts of Prime-Age Adult Death on Rural Households in Kenya, Working Paper No. 5, Tegemeo institute of Agricultural Policy and Development, Nairobi, Kenya.

Recommendations:

- Loevinsohn and Gillespie from the International Food Policy Institute have argued that one needs to develop a "HIV/AIDS lens" when considering agricultural policies.[3] Thus HIV must be "mainstreamed" into development policy. We urge that this idea be central in the formulation of policy for decent employment for all particularly in regions with a high rate of AIDS infection and where the agricultural sector forms a significant part of the national economy.

9. **With this in view we make the follow recommendations to national governments:**

- **Ensure that women are afforded the same property rights as men so they can have the financial means to continue farming and hire replacement labor if needed; without these rights they can seek employment in overcrowded urban areas which may lead to sexual exploitation or exploitation in domestic service and can exacerbate the general unemployment problems in the towns. We urge that loans to females and changes in property rights are necessary as parts of an employment promotion package geared to agriculture in a time of HIV/AIDS.**

- **Develop and provide resources for extension services so that loans to buy equipment and to avoid selling off assets can be provided as needed; such services should also provide agricultural job training to educate and resource a switch to less labor extensive crops and farming systems in the situation of reduced labor due to the pandemic.**

- **Provide additional resources from some of the current funding available in the face of the pandemic to ensure that education at both the primary and secondary levels is accessible to all children both girls and boys. Such education is essential for children to be prepared to enter the productive workforce.**

- **Child labor is not an acceptable substitute for adult labor. Instead policies should encourage the "importation" of replacement labor to make up for the loss of prime age adult deaths due to HIV/AIDS and to ensure that it is not child labor that does the replacing. Resources should be budgeted to ensure that the country's infrastructure is adequate for the accommodation and transport necessary for access to the agricultural areas, for HIV/AIDS care and treatment and for educational facilities. All of these elements must be a part of the "decent employment for all agenda."**

- **Policy to give attention to the agricultural sector as decent employment must take into account the differences between the death of a female head of household and a male head of household within the agricultural sector. It must ensure both the production of needed food crops and the more profitable cash crops. Surviving farmers need to be supplied with agricultural extension services so that they are able to plan for the more efficient use of the land along with needed access to cash crop markets.**

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[3] Loevinsohn, M. and Gillespies, S. (2003): *Food Security, and Rural Livelihoods*, FCND Discussion Paper No. 157, International Food Policy Institute, Washington D.C.